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— Editorial —

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Memorials or medicine?

The U.S. citizens who lived during World War II certainly deserve to be honored in word and in stone, but it is troublesome that so many of them must now struggle for the basic necessities of life.

With "The Greatest Generation" by Tom Brokaw on best seller lists, the boomer generation has been paying tribute to its forebears.

Construction will begin in July for the first national World War II monument, which will be built on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. According to its Web site (www.wwiimemorial.com), the memorial will "honor all military who fought in the war; the citizens on the home front, the nation at large and the purpose and idealism that motivated the nation's call to arms."

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It is funded entirely by private contributions and "enjoys overwhelming support from the American people. More than 450 veterans organizations representing 11 million veterans, hundreds of thousands of individual Americans, hundreds of corporations and foundation, dozens of civic, fraternal and professional organizations and 48 state Legislatures have joined the effort to say thank-you to America's WWII generation."

Yet a recent report reveals that prescription drugs cost a lot more for uninsured senior citizens in Maine than the same drugs from the same manufacturers cost in Europe, Canada and Japan. In fact, 88 per-

cent more, on average. As Rep. Tom Allen said, this is "truly shocking."

This study is the fifth in a series on prescription drug pricing that Rep. Allen has commissioned. Prepared with assistance from the House Committee on Government Reform, the report found, for example, that a prescription for Celebrex costing \$31.20 in Paris, France costs \$77.91 in Paris, Maine; a Prilosec prescription costing \$30 in Rome, Italy costs \$116 in Rome, Maine.

If the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act, introduced by Rep. Allen, were law today, the average senior citizen would save more than 40 percent on their prescriptions.

This bill has more co-sponsors than any other bill in Congress that deals with prescription drugs, yet "it faces formidable and determined opposition from the pharmaceutical industry, which has grown rich at the expense of those least able to afford the drugs their doctors prescribe," Rep. Allen says.

Last week, the citizen watchdog group Common Cause released a study showing that in the past five election cycles, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association and its members spent an estimated \$360 million on political contributions, lobbying and advertising campaigns to protect its legislative agenda.

"This report reveals why there is no Medicare prescription drug benefit," Rep. Allen said. Pharmaceutical company price gouging must stop.

"It's time to put people before profits. It's time to put prescription drugs for seniors before tax cuts for billionaires," Rep. Allen says.

Indeed, how can we sing the praises of "the greatest generation" and not be concerned about their having to choose between medicine and food?